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UNCLAS COLOMBO 001991

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SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS, IO/T

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: SNAR AORC CE

SUBJECT: Colombo Plan: Report on November 18 Special Session

Refs: (A) State 314650

- (B) Colombo 1850 (All Notal)

¶11. (U) This message is Sensitive But Unclassified --
Please handle accordingly.

¶12. (SBU) On November 18, the Colombo Plan Council held a Special Session to address pressing matters in the wake of the postponed 39th Consultative Committee Meeting (CCM), originally scheduled for April 2003, in Tehran, Iran. The following key decisions were taken:

-- Mongolia and Vietnam were approved for full membership by the Council.

-- The proposed amendment to the Colombo Plan Constitution regarding suspension of training opportunities to member states with annual dues four or more years in arrears was tabled pending further consultation by the U.S. representative with its host government. (Septel will provide expanded background on the issue and request Department guidance.)

-- Cambodia's request for exemption of 20 years of unpaid dues and request for future exemption of membership fees was denied by the Council.

-- The offer, by Bhutan, to host the 40th CCM in 2005 was welcomed by the member states.

-- The offer, by Iran, to host the rescheduled 39th CCM in April or May 2004 was noted by the Secretary General, who then suggested May 9-10, 2004 for the meeting. Member states welcomed the suggested date, but noted that they had to discuss it with their respective governments. The U.S. indicated that, in its long-held position, it had no objection to the Iranian government hosting the meeting, but added that it would not attend. (Note: The 39th CCM, originally scheduled for April 2003 in Tehran, Iran, was postponed due to the Iraq conflict.)

-- Regarding the substance of the 39th CCM, the Secretary General suggested that, as 2004 is the 10 year

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anniversary of the revitalization program of the Colombo Plan, an "Eminent Persons Group" be formed, prior to the CCM, to evaluate what the organization has accomplished in the past 10 years and to provide strategic planning for the next 5-10 years. In response to Ambassador's query, given that the U.S. will not be present in Tehran, the Secretary General said he will present to the Council the terms of reference for this group at the next Council meeting.

¶13. (U) The Special Session was attended by representatives of Australia, Burma, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the U.S., and Vietnam, as well as the Colombo Plan President and Secretary General.

LUNSTEAD